

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOGADISCIO 0097

EXDIS

NAIROBI FOR AMBASSADOR LOUGHRAN

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: PBOR, SO, ET

SUBJ: SIAD ASKS WESTERN SUPPORT TO THWART ANTICIPATED OFFENSIVE

1. SUMMARY: SOMALI PRESIDENT SIAD CALLED IN THE CHARGE AND CHIEFS OF MISSION OF THE FOUR OTHER MAJOR WESTERN POWERS JAN 16 TO WARN THAT A SOVIET CONCERTED OFFENSIVE AGAINST NORTHERN SOMALIA WAS IMMINENT. SIAD APPEALED FOR WESTERN TROOPS TO DEFEND SOMALI AND QUOTE YOUR INTERESTS END QUOTE. HE MADE IT CLEAR HE DID NOT BELIEVE THE SECURITY COUNCIL AND EFFECTIVE FORUM TO DEAL WITH THE THREAT HE PERCEIVES. HE CONTENTED THE RESPONSE TO HIS OGADEN PEACE EFFORTS AMONG AFRICAN STATES WAS GOOD, BUT WARNED THAT OAU MACHINERY IS SLOW. THE SOMALI LEADER HAS CRIED WOLF BEFORE, BUT HIS PRESENT CONCERN IS APPARENT. WE OUGHT CONCERT WITH OUR ALLIES AND PRESS HKM TO DEFINE AN ACCEPTABLE SETTLEMENT IN THE OGADEN BEFORE DECIDING HOW TO RESPOND TO HIS APPEAL. END SUMMARY.

2. PRESIDENT SIAD BARRE SUMMONED ME TOGETHER WITH THE FRENCH AND ITALIAN AMBASSADORS, AND GERMAN AND BRITISH CHARGES TO A BRIEFING AT 0030 JAN.; 16. SIAD EXPLAINED HE
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HAD CALLED US TOGETHER AT THAT UNUSUAL HOUR TO ASK US TO CONVEY TO OUR RESPECTIVE GOVERNMENTS THE MESSAGE THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SOMALI DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC HAS INFORMATION THAT A SOVIET CONCERTED LAND AND SEA OFFENSIVE AGAINST NORTHERN SOMALIA IS IMMINENT. SIAD REPORTED THAT ETHIOPIAN AIRCRAFT IN FLIGHTS OF 12 TO 18 WERE FLYING PERIODIC RECONNAISSANCE MISSIONS OVER HARGESIA, BERBERA,

AND OTHER NORTHER SOMALI TOWNS. HE ADDED THAT A NEW UNIT OF 1,500 PDRY TROOPS HAD JUST REACHED THE NORTHERN FRONT. HE ALSO ASSERTED THAT THE CUBAN BUILD-UP CONTINUES, ABETTED BY THE RECENT VISIT OF RAUL CASTRO. THE SOMALI LEADER SAID FRIENDLY SOUTH YEMENIS AND GSDDR SOURCES INSIDE THE DIRGUE ITSELF PROVIDED INFORMATION ON BOTH THE LAND AND SEA ATTACK PLANS, AND THAT HE HAD NO DOUBTS AS TO THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE INFORMATION.

3. THE SOMALI PRESIDENT REQUESTED THE INTERVENTION OF THE FIVE WESTERN GOVERNMENTS TO THWART THE ANTICIPATED ATTACK. HE REQUESTED EACH GOVERNMENT TO SEND DEFENSIVE MILITARY FORCES TO SOMALIA TO DEFEND QUOTE YOUR INTERESTS AS WELL AS OURS END QTE. SIAD ASSERTED THE SOVIETS WERE ANXIOUS TO PUNISH SOMALIA BEFORE HIS EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF THE OGADEN WAR COULD BE REALIZED. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION, HE SAID THAT HIS EMISSARIES WHO HAD JUST COMPLETED TOURS OF AFRICA FOUND WIDE-SPREAD AVERSION TO THE SOVIET AND CUBAN PRESENCE ON THE HORN EXCEPT IN A FEW COUNTRIES SUCH AS ANGOLA. HE ADDED THAT IT TOOK TIME TO MOBILIZE THE OAU MACHINERY, HOWEVER, AND HE FEARED THE ATTACK WOULD COME BEFORE THAT BODY COULD ACT.

4. SIAD DISPLAYED NO ENTHUSIASM FOR RAISING THE ISSUE IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL OF THE UNITED NATIONS. WHEN PRESSED
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BY BOTH THE BRITISH AND THE GERMAN ON THIS POINT HE CON- TENDED THAT RESOLUTIONS WOULD BE OF LITTLE HELP TO HIM IF SOMALIA WERE OCCUPIED. HE ASSERTED THAT THE FINAL AIM OF THE SOVIETS WAS TO REPLACE HIS GOVERNMENT WITH A PUPPET REGIME THAT WOULD DO SOVIET BIDDING. HE DOUBTED THE SECURITY COUNCIL WAS THE VEHICLE WHICH COULD BLOCK THAT DESIGN, BUT SAID HE WAS CERTAIN THE SOVIETS WOULD AVOID A CONFRONTATION WITH THE UNITED WESTERN POWERS.

5. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION SIAD SAID HE HAD DISCUSSED THE DISPATCH OF TROOPS TO SOMALIA WITH FRIENDLY ARAB LEADERS, BUT IN EACH CASE HAD ALSO BEEN ADVISED THAT THIS COULD NOT BE UNDERTAKEN WITHOUT CONSULTATION WITH THE WEST. IN ANOTHER CONTEXT WHEN I ASKED HIM WHAT SHAPE HE FORESAW FOR A POSSIBLE SETTLEMENT IN THE OGADEN, HE AVOIDED A DIRECT REPLY BY REPEATING AGAIN THE STEPS HE HAD TAKEN TO OPEN NEGOTIATIONS, AND AGAIN ALLOWING THAT THERE WAS NOW LITTLE TIME. HE TOUCHED BRIEFLY ON FRIC- TIONS WITH KENYA, ARGUING AGAIN THAT IT WAS SOVIET INFLUENCE WHICH PROMPTED CANDIDATES FOR THE SUCCESSION TO PLAY AN ANTI-SOMALI ROLE.

6. AT THE CLOSE OF THE 80 MINUTE SESSION, SIAD EXPLAINED THAT HIS BRIEFING WAS CARRIED OUT AS A RESULT OF A DECISION OF THE HIGHEST POLITICAL LEADERSHIP OF THE GSDR. HE ASKED EACH OF US TO REPORT HIS MESSAGE PROMPTLY, AND SAID HE LOOKED FORWARD TO AN EARLY REPLY.

7. SIAD HAS CRIED WOLF BEFORE, AND THE TEMPTATION TO MINIMIZE HIS DRAMATIC POST MIDNIGHT APPEAL IS STRONG. THE NEW ELEMENT IN HIS MESSAGE IS THE AERIAL RECONNAISSANCE. HE GAVE NO INFORMATION TO BACK UP HIS WARNING OF A SEA ATTACK OTHER THAN TO SAY IT WILL BE MADE BY BLACKS WHO ACT FOR THE SOVIETS. HIS LITANY INCLUDED FAMILIAR POINTS THAT THE SOPHISTICATED AND LONG RANGE WEAPONS WILL BE HANDLED BY CUBANS AND SOVIETS. WHATEVER
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THE ACTUAL SITUATION IS, HOWEVER, SIAD IS CLEARLY CONCERNED. IF HE HAS THOUGHT SERIOUSLY ABOUT COMPROMISE IN THE OGADEN, HE IS STILL UNWILLING TO SHARE THE OUTLINES OF WHAT MAY BE AN ACCEPTABLE SETTLEMENT TO THE GSDR. IN CONCERT WITH OUR ALLIES WE OUGHT PRESS HIM ON THIS POINT BEFORE DECIDING HOW WE MIGHT MOST ADVANTAGEOUSLY RESPOND TO HIS APPEAL.

8. DEPT PLEASE DISTRIBUTE THIS MESSAGE TO ADDITIONAL ADDRESSEES AS APPROPRIATE.
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